

Cincinnati Fire/Rescue

Special Information on Firefighters Injured in Flashover

The following media releases and newspaper articles have been compiled by District Fire Chief Mike Kroeger, the Safety & Public Information Officer for Cincinnati Fire/Rescue.

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Good morning, it is now 11:00 AM, Wednesday, 10/15/97, this is District Fire Chief Mike Kroeger, Cincinnati Fire Division, reporting that Fire Chief Robert Wright is extremely pleased to announce that Fire Lieutenant Jerrold Ware will be honored today as the Fire Fighter of the Year by the Cincinnati Exchange Club. Lt. Ware will be given this honor at the Cincinnati Exchange Club's luncheon today, Wednesday, 10/15/97 at 12:00 Noon at the Regal Hotel located downtown at Elm and Fifth Streets. The luncheon will proceed the annual award program which will start approximately 12:45 PM. The media is invited to cover this prestigious event.

You may remember that Lt. Ware was severely injured and burned when he was trapped in a flashover at 2601 Cummins St. on 8/30/97. Lt. Ware fell from the 4th floor of the building during his escape.

For any additional information on the Cincinnati Exchange Club's Fire Fighter of the Year Award, please contact Ms. Marilyn Sullivan at 474-5020.

Good afternoon, this is District Fire Chief Mike Kroeger, Cincinnati Fire Division, it is now 3:45 PM on Thursday, 9/25/97, reporting that Fire Chief Gary Auffart is extremely pleased to announce that Fire Lieutenant Jerrold Ware will be leaving University Hospital tomorrow, Friday, 9/26/97 at approximately 1:00 PM. There will be a news conference tomorrow at the University Hospital in a Nursing Conference Room # 1346 at 12:30 PM. The media is asked to meet in the main lobby of the University Hospital at 12:15 PM where hospital representatives will escort them by elevator to the Nursing Conference Room # 1346. Lt. Ware will address the media during the news conference.

You may remember that Lt. Ware was severely injured and burned when he was trapped in a flashover at 2601 Cummins St. on 8/30/97. Lt. Ware fell from the 4th floor of the building and has been hospitalized since then with extremely serious injuries. His ongoing recovery is truly a miracle. Many area fire fighters are expected to be outside University Hospital to wish Lt. Ware a speedy recovery.

For any additional information, contact Fire Chief Gary Auffart at 352-6220.

Tony was released on Saturday, 9/13/97, from UC Hospital and will recuperate at home.

Thank you for your kind words of encouragement. I am trying to save all of the messages received on this topic and will give them to the injured fire fighters. Please pray for Lt. Ware's and FF Lehman's speedy recovery.

Thanks again,

Mike Kroeger

This message sent out over the CFD Teletype on Wednesday, 9/10/97:

I just wanted to update you on our two ff's at UC Hospital. I accompanied Mr. Shirey, City Manager today to visit them. Mr. Shirey was very moved by the sacrifices these two brave ff's have had to endure. Tony had his bulky hand dressings removed today and started physical therapy. He is looking forward to coming home soon. Jerrold looks great and was eating home made soup with his mom while we were there. He is showing great improvement and in good spirits. He is able to talk in a whisper and tires easily, but it was great to see him sitting up and talking. The African American FF's were there as they have been at the start of this ordeal and all of us, including Mr. Shirey thank them for their heartfelt help to both of our injured heroes.

Good afternoon, this is District 2 Fire Chief John Zompero, Cincinnati Fire Division with an update on our injured fire fighters. Sunday afternoon, 9/7/97, Jerrold Ware was upgraded from critical to serious condition. He was also extubated this afternoon and is breathing on his own. Tony Lehman has received skin grafts on his hands and his condition continues to improve. Tony remains in fair condition.

Neither Jerrold or Tony are receiving visitors at this time. They are both grateful for your concern.

For any additional information, contact District 2 Fire Chief John Zompero at 352-2322.

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Friday, September 5, 1997

Fireman's Heroism in Character

BY CLIFF RADEL



Friends say he's not the last person you'd expect to charge into a burning building. He's the first.

That's Jerrold Ware's way.

"He's not intimidated by anything," says fellow Cincinnati firefighter Greg Williams.

"You can always count on him to pull his load and more," adds firefighter Jamiel Trimble.

"Jerrold was very tough when he played football," says Ed Youngs, Ware's former coach at the University of Cincinnati.

"I just didn't know he was that brave, too."

Jerrold Ware showed his courage in the line of duty over the weekend. With a 4-year-old girl trapped in a burning North Fairmount apartment building, the Cincinnati firefighter was the first man through the door. He rushed up four flights of stairs to the girl's burning bedroom.

"Jerrold loves to be first," says Jamiel Trimble. "He's very competitive. Just play basketball with him. I'm seven inches taller than he is. But he never expects to lose."

Jerrold Ware refuses to lose.

As the little girl was rescued, Jerrold was suddenly trapped by an explosive flashover. Engulfed in searing heat and flames - and with no way down the stairs - he went out the window. He fell four stories, crashing through power lines and landing on top of the oxygen tank firefighters call their air bottle.

When Jerrold came to in critical condition in University Hospital's burns unit, the first thing he wanted to know was: Is the little girl all right?

He couldn't ask that out loud. Tubes were keeping him from talking.

So, he took his one good thumb - on the hand taped to a board and threaded with IVs - and scratched this one-word question on his chest:

Kid?

The 31-year-old firefighter probably had that 4-year-old on his mind because he is the father of three little girls. Maybe he thought of them as he entered the building. Could he see his girls in his mind, crying for help from the top floor of the new townhouse where they live in a restored section of the West End?

Or did he remember how he loves to take them to soccer practice and show them off to his co-workers?

"He's always bringing them by the firehouse," says firefighter Will Jones. "He's so proud of his girls."

No one knows exactly what Jerrold was thinking. But those closest to him know how he acts.

He dashed into that old apartment the same way he ran during his days in the mid-'80s as a punishing linebacker with 100 tackles to his credit during his junior and senior years at UC.

"When he took on a task," remembers Bruce Ivory, UC assistant athletic director, "there was never any half-way. He's the ultimate overachiever with a big heart."

Will Jones thinks of Jerrold's big heart every time he looks out his windows at home.

"He helped me re-screen my windows," he says. "Jerrold's always helping me with something, giving me advice, fixing up my house or helping me get through life."

Will Jones and Greg Williams are holding a vigil for Jerrold, still listed in critical condition, at the hospital.

"We're here because he's more than our great friend," says Will. "He's our brother."

They've worked together at fires and watched out for each other. Now, they're watching out for him and remembering better times. They remember returning, safe from a fire. They'd pull into the firehouse, their truck filled with empty air bottles and caked with soot and ashes.

As soon as they'd start cleaning up, Jerrold would start singing gospel music. His voice is loud and deep. It echoes throughout the firehouse.

If Jerrold could sing one song today, Greg would like to hear him do "Amazing Grace."

No choice could be more appropriate. One of Jerrold's favorites, the hymn is about the perils of falling and the joys of being saved.

Cliff Radel's column appears in The Enquirer Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Call 768-8379 or fax at 768-8340.

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Friday, September 5, 1997

City Toughens Fire Safety Laws

Smoke Detector Now Required in All Homes

BY TANYA BRICKING and LAURA GOLDBERG

The North Fairmount fire that left one firefighter in critical condition Saturday was the impetus for a new ordinance passed Thursday requiring all Cincinnati residences to have working smoke detectors.

Cincinnati City Council passed the ordinance requiring all residences in the city to have working smoke detectors no later than April 1, 1998, with no exemptions.

Building codes for new construction require detectors in single-family homes now, but the "vast majority" of city homes are older and exempt. Rental units were already required to have them.

"Every year we suffer tragic loss of life and property due to preventable fires or the lack of operational smoke detectors in homes," said Councilman Todd Portune, who sponsored the ordinance and one other fire-safety ordinance that also passed Thursday.

"Had that (North Fairmount) smoke detector been operational, I'm certain that tragedy would not have happened," Acting Fire Chief Gary Auffart said Thursday, the day his division filed criminal charges against the building owner. "This is cheap insurance for your life, and it is required."

Fire investigators issued a warrant charging William R. Hill, general partner of the Deanna Apartment Co., with one count of failure to maintain working smoke detectors, a misdemeanor that could carry up to a \$1,000 fine and six months in jail.

The charge came after investigators discovered that a maintenance worker removed a smoke detector battery last month, leaving the building owner responsible, Chief Auffart said.

Mr. Hill could not be reached for comment. Officials at Metro Management, which manages the eight-unit apartment building on Cummins Street for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, declined to comment.

Authorities would have filed the charges even if firefighters had not been injured, said fire Capt. Terry Binford, a district supervisor.

Among provisions of council's smoke detector ordinance: All residences, some of which had been exempt, must have working smoke detectors by the effective date.

The ordinance also puts responsibility on renters, who must make sure their units have

working smoke detectors. That change takes effect in 30 days. It remains the owner's responsibility to install the detector.

Four firefighters were hurt rescuing a 4-year-old girl in the Saturday fire. Two remain at University Hospital. Lt. Jerrold Ware, 31, who fell from a fourth-floor window, was still coughing up soot Thursday and remains in critical condition. Joseph "Tony" Lehman was in fair condition and was scheduled to have surgery on his burned hands.

The Cincinnati Fire Fighters Union, Local 48, has set up a fund to help families of the injured firefighters.

To contribute, checks can be made out in care of CFFU Burn Fund and deposited at any Provident Bank location.

Radio Shack electronics store already has responded, saying it will donate 6,000 smoke detectors to the city. Firefighters are planning a safety campaign and will help install the new detectors.

Council's second fire-safety ordinance passed Thursday makes parents responsible for keeping matches, lighters and other fire-starting materials away from children under 12.

The ordinance on fire-starting materials also says no one may sell or give fire-starting materials to those under 12. A parent may let child under 12 have and use fire-starting materials if the parent "actively" supervises the child's use of the material. The ordinance takes effect in 30 days.

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Tuesday, September 2, 1997

Owners Face Charges in Fire

No Batteries in Smoke Detectors

BY TANYA BRICKING

Late Tuesday, new evidence led Cincinnati fire investigators to predict they will file criminal charges today against owners of a North Fairmount building where four firefighters were injured - one critically - in a fire Saturday.

Fire investigators said batteries should have been kept in the smoke detectors in the apartment of Latashe Gray, 22, said fire Capt. Terry Binford, a district supervisor.

Ms. Gray's daughter, 4, was saved from the fire.

Investigators originally planned to charge Ms. Gray Tuesday with failure to maintain working smoke detectors, a misdemeanor that could carry up to a \$1,000 fine and six months in jail for each day the violation existed.

But a decision to file charges against the owners came after inspecting the apartment and files of Metro Management, which manages the building for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Metro Management officials had no comment.

Records indicate Ms. Gray moved in two months ago and her ceiling fell in last month. By Aug. 11, workers fixed the ceiling and installed smoke detectors on both floors of her two-story apartment in the eight-unit building.

Investigators found one smoke detector on the top floor Tuesday, but it had no batteries, said Capt. Lacey Calloway, fire investigation unit commander. The second detector had not been recovered.

Authorities were looking for Ms. Gray Tuesday after she checked out of the downtown Holiday Inn, where the American Red Cross placed her and daughter Genine after the fire.

Investigators declined to say what evidence led to the owners. The charges have to do with smoke detectors that could have alerted the Grays that a stove burner was left unattended.

Lt. Jerrold Ware, 31, fell from a fourth-floor window Saturday during the rescue.

He remained in critical condition Tuesday. Another firefighter, Joseph "Tony" Lehman was in fair condition Tuesday, and two others had been released.

An ordinance was introduced Tuesday at Cincinnati City Council's law committee that would require that early fire warning systems in all city homes conform to new NFPA (National Fire Protection Agency) standards.

The owners of a building of residential occupancy - where fire warning laws had not been previously imposed - must install fire warning systems by April 1, 1998.

It would be against the proposed city law for occupants to live in any place without operating approved smoke detectors. Council is expected to pass the ordinance Thursday.

IAFF International Association of Fire Fighters - Local 48

Press Release!!!

Due to the overwhelming concern for the Fire Fighters injured at the fire on 2601 Cummins St., a fund has been set up to help fire fighters and their families financially during recovery from such devastating injuries. The Cincinnati Fire Fighters Union, Local 48 IAFF, with support of the Cincinnati Fire Division has established the fund under the name of ***"Cincinnati Fire Fighters Union Local 48 Burned and Injured Fire Fighters Fund"***. Checks may be deposited in the name of this fund at **all Provident Bank Locations**.

Checks can be made out care of **C.F.F.U. Burn Fund**. For any additional information on this fund, please call Local 48's office at Voice: (513)241-3541, Fax: (513)241-7493. Or write to:

Local 48
213 West Ninth Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

The Cincinnati Fire Fighters Union and the Cincinnati Fire Division wish to thank everyone for their concern.

For those of you who wish to send Lt. Ware or FF Lehman get well cards or ARTIFICIAL flowers, their hospital address is:

Jerrold Ware or Joseph Lehman
University Hospital
P.O. Box 670707
Cincinnati, OH 45267-0707

The reason that the Burn Unit cannot accept real flowers is the possibility of transmitting infection. Cards, letters, artificial flowers, or candy bouquets are ok.

We want to thank all for their outpouring of support. Any email messages will be saved and forwarded to Lt. Ware and FF Lehman also.

Thanks again,

Mike Kroeger

Here is an update on Lt. Ware's condition:

I spoke to Univ. Hosp. this AM, 9/2/97, and Lt. Ware is still in very critical condition. The most life threatening condition is the burns inside his lungs. His external burn injuries and the injuries he sustained from his fall are not considered to be life threatening at this time. He has shown some slight improvement, but is not out of the woods as yet and is still fighting for his life.

Sincerely,

Mike Kroeger

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Monday, September 1, 1997

Burned Rescuer Asks About Fate of Girl

BY B.G. GREGG

Firefighter Jerrold Ware, fighting for his life at University Hospital, managed enough strength Sunday to ask about the 4-year-old girl he was trying to save when trapped in a flashover.

"He could almost open one eye a little bit, and I was sitting there holding his hand, and he slowly lifted his finger to his chest," Acting Fire Chief Gary Auffart said. "I thought he was scratching his chest, and, in his condition, that would be good.

"But he took his thumb and slowly made a K. Then he spelled out kid. He wanted to know how the kid was. It was almost like a movie.

"I told him she had been rescued and was OK, and I could tell he was relieved."

Chief Auffart said Lt. Ware was having trouble breathing and suffered severe burns on most of his body. He also broke his arm when he fell from a fourth floor window while fighting a fire Saturday in North Fairmount.

"The main problem right now is his ventilation," Chief Auffart said. "He's having a lot of problems with his lungs."

Three other firefighters were injured trying to save Genine Gray, who was screaming for help near the fourth-floor window.

Daniel Boller Jr. and Tyrone Norman were treated and released from the hospital. Joseph "Tony" Lehman was in fair condition Sunday at University Hospital with burns on his hands and face.

"I respect his decision to jump from the window," Mr. Lehman said. "When you're in something like that, all you're thinking about is you want to make it through the day and you want to see the wife and kids."

Genine and her mother, Latasha Gray, 22, were staying in a hotel Sunday, courtesy of the

Red Cross. The fire was caused by food left cooking on the stove.

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Tuesday, September 2, 1997

Rescued Girl, Mom Pray for Firefighter

BY JOHN ECKBERG and JULIE RALSTON

Latashe Gray went to University Hospital on Sunday and again on Monday to thank and pray for Lt. Jerrold Ware, the firefighter who helped save her daughter's life on Saturday morning.

Doctors say they're amazed Mr. Ware didn't suffer worse injuries in his blazing four-story fall after going to assist the girl.

Ms. Gray's 4-year-old daughter, Genine, was trapped at a window of the North Fairmount apartment building while a fire raged inside. Mr. Ware was among the firefighters who rushed to save the girl.

Genine and Ms. Gray went to the hospital for a simple reason, she said Monday: "I want him to see my baby ... I want him to see her," she said. "I went up to the hospital on Sunday but they told me to come back today. It's a blessing that he saved her. It was like, forget my life, I'm going to save her. He risked his life, and I have my baby."

Mr. Ware remained in critical condition Monday at University Hospital. At a hospital news conference Monday evening, Mr. Ware's mother, Rebecca Ware-Stewart, and wife, Monique, said he is alert and recovering slowly.

"We have no doubt that God performed a miracle on Jerrold," Ms. Ware-Stewart said.

Doctors say the same. Mr. Ware sustained no injuries to the spinal cord in his fall; his most serious injuries are to the lungs, which are inflamed from smoke inhalation, and to his left arm, which was shattered.

"That's not something we expect to see without multiple injuries," Dr. Jay Johannigman said of Mr. Ware's fall.

Firefighter Joseph "Tony" Lehman, who is in fair condition at University Hospital with burns to the right cheek, chin and hands, said at Monday's news conference that the fire was unusual, because the apartment had an interior stairwell that led from the third floor to the fourth.

When the apartment caught fire, the stairwell acted as a "chimney" for the billowing

waves of heat. Mr. Lehman also was caught in the flashover that rolled up to the fourth floor.

"I've learned enough to know that this is not a usual situation," he said.

Ms. Gray said the apartment had smoke detectors two weeks ago, but when a ceiling caved in and was repaired, the detectors were removed and not reinstalled.

"It's not like I had detectors and they weren't working. I didn't have detectors because they were not replaced," she said. "I'd call every day for two weeks and complain but nothing was done."

Cincinnati Fire Division Capt. Lacey Calloway, commander of the fire investigation unit, said authorities won't know the status of the smoke detectors until today. "We need to look at work records and talk to the property management and the building owner," he said.

A representative from Metro Management, which owns the eight-unit apartment building, could not be reached for comment.

The fire apparently began with an unattended burner left on high on the kitchen stove in Ms. Gray's apartment, Capt. Calloway said. Ms. Gray said she did not know her apartment was on fire until her daughter went into a bathroom Saturday and began to shout: "Mommy, stop, drop and roll," Ms. Gray said.

The girl had picked up the fire safety tip by watching the public television children's show Barney & Friends. She put it to good use.

"I went into the hallway and started knocking on doors to get people moving," Ms. Gray said. When she returned to the room where her daughter was, she could not see her because of the thick smoke but repeatedly tried to enter the room anyway.

"I guess I passed out because when I came to, somebody was dragging me out," she said. Efforts by neighbors to reach the girl, who had rolled along the floor to the window, were unsuccessful.

Smoke billowed out the window above the girl as she sobbed and awaited rescue. "She said she was going to jump. I told her don't jump, don't jump," Ms. Gray said.

A firefighter on a ladder finally rescued Genine as a wave of flame rolled through the apartment, trapping Lt. Ware, whose clothing then caught on fire. He could not escape back through the building and jumped from a window.

"I didn't know it was a person. I thought it was a fireball when he came out," Ms. Gray said. "That's what he looked like: a fireball."

Ms. Gray said she would never be able to repay Lt. Ware and the other firefighters who responded to the call. "They put their lives on hold to save my baby," she said.

Monique Ware said her husband probably will return to firefighting once he recovers. Doctors hope to ween him from a breathing machine within a couple of weeks.

"Jerrold is a very strong man," she said. "He loves firefighting. I think if he gets full recovery and his strength, he'll want to come back."

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Monday, September 1, 1997

Firefighter Knows Ware's Pain

Orme Hurt in Flashover in December

BY B.G. GREGG

Cincinnati firefighter Edward Orme doesn't know Lt. Jerrold Ware well, but he has intimate knowledge about the pain he is experiencing.

Lt. Ware was critically injured Saturday. He was trapped in a flashover in a North Fairmount apartment and then fell from a fourth floor window. Mr. Orme, a firefighter with Ladder Co. 5, survived a flashover while fighting a Northside fire in December. He suffered severe burns and his protective equipment, like Lt. Ware's, was charred from the intense heat.

"They said I was in 2200 degrees for 10 seconds," Mr. Orme said.

Mr. Orme was checking the second floor of a burning house for trapped victims when the flashover occurred.

"I went to the top of the stairs and I saw fire to the left, so I went right," he said. "I heard a window break and the fire was just sucked down the hall right over me.

"It felt like somebody hit me in the back with a hammer."

Despite being on fire, he managed to struggle out of the house the same way he came in.

"When something goes wrong, you go right back to the basics," he said. "You ask, 'How did I get in here? What did I do? How do I get out?' I'm sure that's what Jerrold did."

Mr. Orme suffered second- and third-degree burns over most of his body. He spent one day at University Hospital, where his girlfriend learned to care for the burns, and spent

the next month at home recuperating.

He said the pain was excruciating, especially after taking a bath or shower, which was necessary to keep infection from the wounds.

"For two weeks I was ready to cry every time I took a shower," he said.

He said there were concerns about his mental recovery from the fire, but he has managed.

"A lot of people were watching me the first few times I had fires," he said. "But this is my job, this is what I do."

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Monday, September 1, 1997

Sixth Sense Warned of Danger

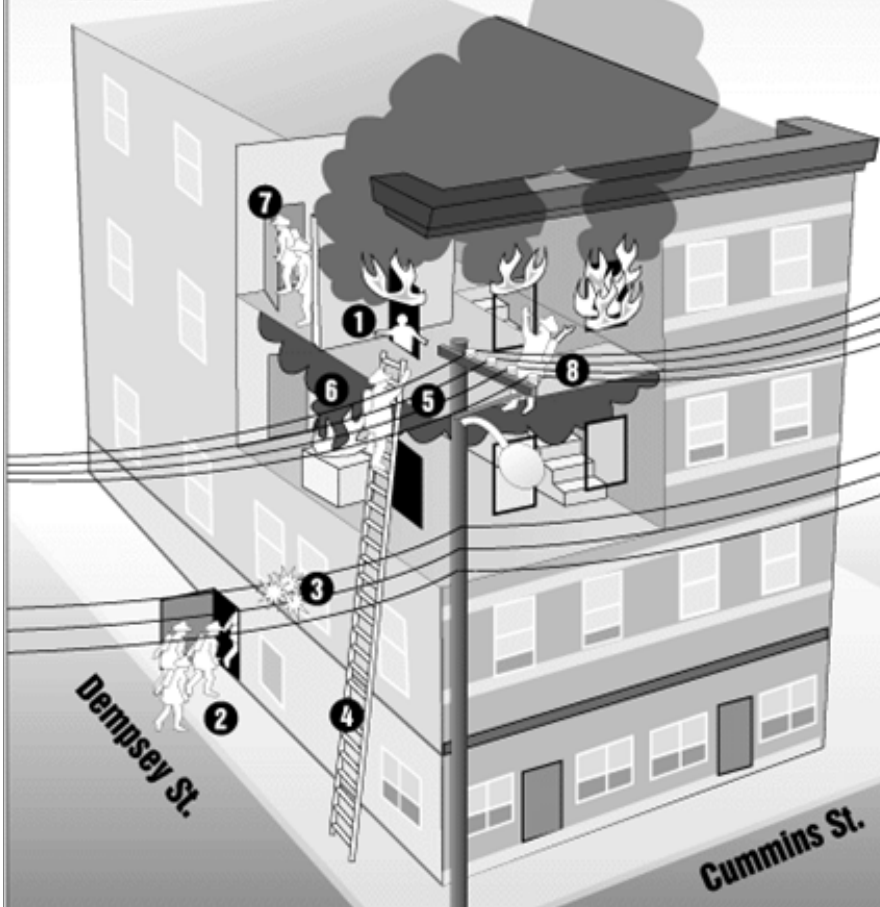
Three Trapped, Injured in Flashover

BY B.G. GREGG

The rescue at 2601 Cummins St.

Firefighters responding to a two-alarm fire at 9:28 a.m. find a 4-year-old girl trapped on the fourth floor of an apartment building. Heavy smoke is pouring from the building, and the girl's mother is on the street, screaming for help.

- ❶ When firefighters arrive, 4-year-old Genine Gray is hanging out the window, screaming for help. She is enveloped by thick, black clouds of smoke.
- ❷ Four firefighters enter the building through the main entrance on Dempsey.
- ❸ Firefighter Daniel Bolter Jr. climbs a truck ladder, but is shocked by electrical wires while trying to reach Genine.
- ❹ Others erect a portable ladder, which barely reaches; the top rung is 6 inches below the windowsill.
- ❺ Firefighter Terry Schorsch pulls Genine out the window.
- ❻ A fireball that originated downstairs in the kitchen explodes into the bedroom. Lt. Jerrold Ware, who had reached Genine just as she was lifted out, is trapped.
- ❼ Firefighters Joseph Lehman and Tyrone Norman are burned when the fireball races past them. They and Lt. Kirt Brinkman, who was uninjured, are able to escape into the building's corridor and down the main stairwell.
- ❽ Lt. Ware calls for help, then climbs out the window when the heat becomes too intense. Unable to hold on, Lt. Ware plunges at least 35 feet, landing on the top of his air tank.



The Cincinnati Enquirer/R. Mazzola

Two of the firefighters trapped in a "flashover" while fighting a Saturday fire said they sensed something ominous was about to occur seconds before a billowing "heat wave" engulfed them.

"All of the sudden, it got completely black and, like a sixth sense, you know something is not right," said Lt. Kurt Brinkman. "It got really hot, and I knew we were in trouble."

Lt. Brinkman and Firefighter Joseph "Tony" Lehman had followed Lt. Jerrold Ware into a North Fairmount apartment Saturday morning, trying to reach a screaming 4-year-old girl hanging out a fourth-floor window, and searching for other victims.

Lt. Ware was trapped during the flashover - an explosive-type event that occurs when the items in a fire simultaneously ignite - burned severely, and either jumped or fell from the fourth-floor window while trying to escape the heat.

He was in critical condition at University Hospital Sunday with second- and third-degree

burns, lung problems and a broken arm.

Family members, reached at the hospital, declined to comment.

Firefighters were still stunned Sunday by the sudden turn of misfortune that injured Lt. Ware, Firefighter Lehman and two other firefighters.

"Our department is shook by this," said Assistant Chief John Neal. "It's shook us to the core. I can see it in the guys' faces."

Lt. Brinkman and Firefighter Lehman, from the University Hospital bed where he is being treated for burns to his face and neck, said they crawled through the smoky apartment, trying to reach the 4-year-old, Genine Gray, and searching for others.

"Tony was about 2 feet ahead of me, and Jerrold was somewhere ahead of us," Lt. Brinkman said. "We could see the light coming through the windows."

Firefighter Lehman, 36, managed to open a window near where the girl was standing, hoping to get on the fire escape and grab her. But she was too far away.

"When I closed the window, that's when I felt the first wave of heat," he said. "I knew something was wrong, and I had to get out of there."

Lt. Brinkman felt it, too.

"My neck was burning and my hands were burning, and I remember yelling for Tony, telling him we had to get out," he said.

As he was crawling, Firefighter Lehman's mask got caught and yanked to the right side of his face. He had to make a choice: take off his glove and fix the mask, or try to get out with an unsecured mask.

"I figured it was better to burn my hand than my face," he said. "When I took off my glove, it hurt so fast I wasn't sure what it was."

As the wave of heat billowed through the apartment, Lt. Brinkman was jolted by a scream. "I heard a scream I had never heard before in my life, and I hope I never hear it again," he said. "It was a scream like someone was dying."

He was unsure whether the scream came from Firefighter Lehman or Lt. Ware. He couldn't locate either in the smoke.

Somehow, he managed to get to a window and jump to a fire escape. He escaped serious injury, saying he felt as if he were sunburned.

Meanwhile, Firefighter Lehman, who said he felt a second, more intense heat wave about

30 seconds after the first, started crawling, ungloved hand in his coat, toward the sound of spraying water.

He called for help, but no one came.

"I was getting angry because I couldn't believe no one was responding," he said. "But when I got there, I realized the hose had broken loose and melted through, It was spraying water out the back, and no one was there."

He stopped a second and cooled his burning hand in the water. He felt around in the smoke, grabbing the rail of the staircase he had climbed to get to the apartment. A few seconds later, he was free.

"It's like it is happening to someone else," he said from his hospital bed. "It's surreal."

He is expected to be released from the hospital in a week. He does not know when he will be able to return to work.

Lt. Ware's condition is much worse. Machines are feeding him and helping him to breathe, and doctors are still trying to determine the extent of his injuries.

It is unclear whether Lt. Ware jumped or fell from the fourth-floor window, which he dangled from trying to escape the intense heat inside the apartment.

Firefighter Tyrone Norman, 37, who apparently took the same staircase out as Firefighter Lehman, was treated for second-degree burns on his neck and face at University Hospital and released.

Firefighter Daniel Boller Jr., 31, was injured as he rode a ladder, trying to reach Genine Gray. The ladder came into contact with power lines, and he was shocked, burning both arms. He was also treated at University and released.

Genine and her mother, Latasha Gray, 22, were treated for smoke inhalation at University Hospital and released. They were staying in a hotel Sunday, courtesy of the American Red Cross, and did not return phone calls requesting an interview.

Smoke detectors in the Gray apartment were not working, and fire officials are still trying to determine why.

Smoke damage left about 20 people homeless. The Red Cross helped some find a place to stay. Others went with friends or family members.

This is District One Fire Chief Howard Reed, Cincinnati Fire Division, announcing that the Cincinnati Fire Division will be having a press conference at University Hospital. This is being held to update the media on Fire Lieutenant Ware's and Fire Fighter Lehman's condition. The attending physicians will answer questions. Ms. Rebecca Stewart, Lt. Ware's mother, will make a statement, and Fire Fighter Lehman's, his wife

and sister, will be there to answer questions. This press conference will take place at the University Hospital's Emergency Room at Highland and Goodman Streets at 4:30 PM today, Monday, 9/1/97.

For additional information, contact District One Fire Chief Howard Reed at 352-2311.

The Cincinnati Enquirer

Sunday, August 31, 1997

Four Firefighters Hurt in Rescue

One Falls 35 Feet to Escape Ball of Flame

BY KRISTEN DELGUZZI

A Cincinnati firefighter was critically injured Saturday when he was trapped in a burning fourth-floor apartment bedroom in North Fairmount and then fell from the window to escape.

Two other firefighters were burned and a fourth suffered an electric shock while trying to rescue a 4-year-old girl, who was pulled to safety unharmed.

By the time fire trucks pulled up in front of the building at 2601 Cummins St. Saturday morning, little Genine Gray was hanging out a fourth-floor window, sobbing and screaming for help.

Cincinnati firefighters responding to the two-alarm fire quickly launched two rescue attempts: one through the building and one from outside.

A firefighter atop a portable ladder pulled Genine to safety just as a huge fireball exploded into the room where she had been, trapping **Lt. Jerrold Ware**, 31, in the front bedroom. It also raced over two other firefighters, burning both.

Lt. Ware, unable to back out of the room and unable to fight the fire - the hose that they had taken into the building was singed open when the fire exploded - radioed for help, acting Cincinnati Fire Chief Gary Auffart said.

"Firefighters that were on the ground immediately tried to help, but they were unable to raise the ladders quickly enough," Chief Auffart said. "We attempted to rescue him, but he couldn't stay there long enough for us to get to him."

Lt. Ware, whose breathing equipment and face mask had been burned black when the fire blew into the bedroom, climbed out a window. He was gripping the frame, trying to wait for help. But already severely burned, he was unable to hold on.

He let go and plunged - with his clothing afire - at least 35 feet to the sidewalk.

"It took them forever to put him out," said Alberta Glenn, 45, who lives in the apartment building and had tried to rescue Genine before firefighters arrived. "He was burning. They wrapped him up in a blue blanket and kept patting him and patting him. Then they unwrapped him and took his coat and pants off."

When Lt. Ware fell, he landed on the top of the air tank strapped to his back. The left side of his head and neck were the first parts of his body to strike the ground.

"The impact broke the harness (of the air tank)," said Assistant Chief John Neal. "We think that absorbed a lot of the shock. It distributed the impact throughout his body, like a seatbelt. Even the doctor said that's probably what saved him."

Lt. Ware, a firefighter for nine years, was in critical condition late Saturday in the burns unit at University Hospital. He has a fractured arm and second- and third-degree burns on his head, face and neck. Doctors think he has internal injuries, as well as fractures in his spine.

CAUSE OF FIRE

The girl who was rescued was treated for smoke inhalation and released from the hospital Saturday, as was her mother, Latasha Gray, 22. They are among the eight families - approximately 20 people in all, according to the Red Cross - who were displaced by the fire.

Officials had no damage estimate Saturday but said the building was salvageable. The fire was contained to Ms. Gray's two-story unit. Other units were damaged by smoke and water.

Investigators say the fire began in the kitchen of the Grays' apartment.

Capt. Lacey Calloway, commander of the fire investigation unit, said an unattended stove - a front burner was left on high - caused the fire.

The layout of the apartment, which Chief Auffart called "peculiar," made the fire tricky to battle.

From the outside, it appeared as if all apartments in the brick building were on one story, each accessed from a central hallway and stairwell, he said.

But the Grays' apartment is on two floors: the kitchen and living room are downstairs on the third floor, and the bedrooms and bathroom are upstairs on the fourth floor. The two floors are connected by a private stairway.

When Lt. Ware and the other firefighters raced into the building to save Genine, they immediately went to the fourth floor, where she was. But when they got there, they did not find a fire on the fourth floor, despite thick smoke, Chief Auffart said.

"They weren't aware that the fire started on the third floor," he said, noting that smoke was not visible from the third-floor windows.

While the firefighters were on the fourth floor, the fire downstairs began to heat up until all items ignited at once, creating "an explosive-type event" known as a flashover.

"It literally raced up - blew up - that interior stairwell," Chief Auffart said.

"If that stairwell had not been in there, these people would not have been trapped in there."

The fireball was so hot that it bowed the steel railing on the staircase, Capt. Calloway said.

None of the smoke detectors in the Gray apartment was working, Capt. Calloway said.

He won't know why they weren't working until Tuesday, when he can inspect the files of the company that manages the building.

The eight-unit apartment building is owned by Metro Management, which is subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Robert Haley, a maintenance worker for Metro, said the Gray apartment should have had detectors.

"(Maintenance) had just done some work in there and were told to put two new ones in," Mr. Haley said.

Although crews were told to install detectors, Mr. Haley said he cannot be sure they actually did until he checks records on Tuesday.

Neighbors said Ms. Gray had complained to them - and to management - that her smoke detectors were not working.

MORE INJURIES

The other injured firefighters are:

Daniel Boller Jr., 31, a firefighter for two years, who suffered burns on both arms when he accidentally touched an electrical wire while trying to reach Genine. The shock did not deter him.

"He backed up, went back down the ladder, ducked under the electrical wires and tried to get in the window to get that little girl," Assistant Chief Neal said. "Even though he was injured, he was still trying to get to that child."

Mr. Boller was treated and released.

Joseph Lehman, 36, a firefighter for one year, who was in fair condition Saturday night at University Hospital's burn unit. He suffered second- and third-degree burns on his hands and face when he was caught in the flashover.

Tyrone Norman, 37, a nine-year firefighter, who was treated and released at University for second-degree burns on his neck and face.

Several firefighters also have been temporarily removed from duty because of the shock and stress of seeing their colleagues injured. Officials have called in experts to help them cope.

"I'm very proud of the firefighters who were there," Chief Auffart said. "Without their selfless effort, undoubtedly a 4-year-old girl would be dead today."